

## The Persian Akhbars in the Alienation Office, Poona.

(By Sardar Ganda Singh, M.A.)

The Alienation Office Poona possesses the richest collection of vernacular historical records in India, and it goes to the credit of Dr. Sir Jadunath Sarkar, the President of the Indian Historical Records Commission, that with his persistent efforts the Government of Bombay has done what no other Provincial or State Government in the country has been able to do in furthering the cause of research in Indian history. It has published as many as forty-six volumes of original records in a series of *Selections from the Peshwa Daftar* under the able guidance and editorship of Ráo Bahádúr Mr. G. S. Sardesai. This has finished a good deal of work so far as the Publication of the Marathi records is concerned. The publication of English records has also begun in a series called the *Poona Residency Correspondence*, beginning with *Mahadji Sindhia and North India Affairs, 1785-1794*, edited by Sir Jádunáth Sarkár. The fifth volume is now in the press.

What remains to be explored, and which deserves no less attention, is the Persian Section of the records. Sir Jadunath has cursorily looked through these papers and has spoken very highly of their historical importance.

In 1933 Dr. Muhammad Názim of the Archaeological Department selected and edited 95 papers, which form the first and the only Persian brochure that has so far been published. Professor B. D. Varma of the Ferguson College Poona has also selected 74 news-letters on different topics and is working on them since 1933, but, perhaps, for want of leisure he has not been able to complete his work as yet.

Evidently it is the dearth of Persian-knowing scholars of history in Poona and its neighbourhood that is responsible for the neglect of these Persian records.

I had an opportunity to examine them from 21st to 28th August last in connection with my search for records dealing with the history of the Sikhs during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. To my surprise, I found these records bundled up together in ten *rumals* or *bastas* without any arrangement or classification. The news-letters in four of the *rumals* had been unfolded and straightened by Sir Jadunath Sarkar. But they had yet to be arranged and classified. As none of the *rumals* could be successfully examined for any historical research purposes without examining each and every paper in all of them, I took in hand the classification of these *rumals*.

With the exception of one *rumal*, which contained some revenue papers, farmans and other miscellaneous records, the main bulk of the *rumals* comprised *Akhbars* or news-letters from different courts, military camps and important towns, summaries of news submitted from different places by the *Dak Mutsaddis* (*Akhbar ba-mujab Nawishta-i-Mutsadian-i-Dak*) and "Selected News of India" (*Muntakhib Akhbar-i-Hindostan*). With the exception of about two dozen letters and documents regarding Tipu Sultan, Mir Alim, Raghuji Bhonsle, etc., and a few news-sheets from Lucknow, Faizabad, etc., all the News-letters relate to the early nineteenth century and appear to have been sent to the British Resident at Poona, most of them having been addressed to Colonel (afterwards General) Smith, for whom I found covering letters enclosed with most of the folded news-sheets.

I felt as if some of the news-letters had not been opened even for the first time, as particles of drying sand could still be seen shining on the ink. Having unfolded and straightened them, I sorted them topically according to the courts, persons and places with which they dealt; and I am glad to say that all the Persian *Akhbars* in those *rumals* are now arranged subject-wise, and there should be no difficulty for a research scholar to get at all the papers on any particular subject in a couple of minutes.

The classification has been done in two lots. The first lot contains papers which were exclusively handled by myself, though they appear to have been cursorily gone through by Sir Jadunath, and the second lot contains those which had been originally unfolded by him and kept separate under his directions. The two lots have, for the present, been classified and kept separately. But as both of them contain practically the same sets of papers, they can be easily put together.

The following is the list of topics and files in the two lots :—

(i) *The First Lot*—

1. Parchá-i-Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Maharaja Sawái Malhar Rao Holkar.
2. Parchá-i-Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Nawab Amír-ud-Daulah Muhammad Amir Khan Bahadur.
3. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Rájráná Zálím Singh Bahadur.
4. Parchá-i-Akhbár-i-Mahárája Áljáh Daulat Rao Sindhia Bahadur.
5. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Mahárájá Sawái Jagat Singh Bahadur.
6. Akhbár-i-Darbar-i-Raja Raghuji Bhonsle Sainá Sahib Bahadur.
7. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Muntizim-ud-Daulah Bahadur (Mr. Metcalf).
8. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Maharaja Jaswant Rao Holkar Bahadur.
9. Akhbár-i-Hazur-i-Wálá, and Akhbár-i-Dárbár-i-Muqaddas Mu'allá.
10. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Shrimant Rao Pandit Pradhán Bahadur.
11. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Sardar Ranjit Singh Bahadur.
12. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Nawab Ásafjáh Bahadur.
13. Akhbár-i-Darbar-i-Raja Apa Sahib Bhonsle Bahadur.
14. Akhbári-i-Deorhi-i-Maharaja Sawái Pratáp Singh Bahadur.
15. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-General Dickson.
16. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-William Frazer.
17. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-General Ochterloney.
18. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i- (?) Sahib Bahadur.
19. Akhbár-i-Lashkar-i-Gopal Rao Bahadur.
20. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Shah Nizam-ud-Din.
21. News-letters regarding Raurji (Rauloji) Sindhia.
22. A news-letter regarding the Sikhs, Taimur Shah, Shah Wali and a nephew of Nadir Shah.

23. A News-letter dated 28th-29th Rajab, 1231 Hijri.
  24. Ahwál-i-Tázá ba-Mujab nawishtá-i-Mutsaddián-i-Dak.
  25. Muntakhib Akhbár-i-Hindostan.
  26. Akhbár-i-Sháhjahánábád.
  27. Akhbár-i-Qasbá-i-Járwá.
  28. Parchá-i-Akhbár-i-Hoshangábád-o-Bhupál.
  29. Parchá-i-Akhbár-i-Sioni.
  30. Intikhab-i-Akhbár-o-Roznámchá-i-Khándes.
  31. Akhbár-i-Lucknow.
  32. Covering letters to the News-Sheets and letters submitted to Colonel (afterwards General) Smith.
  33. A News-letter of Mír Álam Bahadur.
  34. Five letters of Sir John Shore, Governor General, to Maharaja Raghuji Bhonsle.
  35. Letter from Governor General Cornwallis to Tipu Sultan.
  36. Letter from Tipu Sultan to Governor General.
  37. Malik Isa Khan's two letters.
  38. Two letters to Mír Álam Bahadur.
  39. A letter addressed to Mr. Elphinstone (Received 25th January 1809).
  40. A Sheet containing three letters regarding the Akalkot State.
  41. A letter addressed to Mr. Stretchy.
  42. A letter of Muhammad Beg Khán Vakíl to the Emperor dated 20th Jamadi-ul-awwal, 1225 A.H., and a copy of the Emperor's letter to Muhammad Beg Khan.
  43. Copy of a letter of Tipu Sultan to Lord Cornwallis, received January 1794.
  44. Copy of a letter of Ghulam Ali Khan and Ali Raza Khan to Mr. Cherry received 11th February, 1793.
  45. Miscellaneous—Khaifiyat-i-Bhawani Prasad, undated; two undated news-letters; a news-letter dated 20th Zil-Haj, 1232 (?) A.H.; Akhbár-i-Pindará.
  46. Miscellaneous unsorted papers.
  47. Miscellaneous unsorted papers.
- (ii) *The Second Lot—*
1. Parchá-i-Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Mahárájá Sawái Malhár Rao Holkar Bahadur
  2. Parchá-i-Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Amír-ud-Daula Muhammad Amír Khán Bahadur.

3. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Rájraná Zálím Singh Bahadur.
4. Parchá-i-Akhabár-Maharájá Daulat Ráo Sindhia Bahadur.
5. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-Maharájá Sawái Jagat Singh Bahadur.
6. Akhbár-i-Raja Raghuji Bhonsle Sainá Sáhí Bahadur.
7. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Muntizim-ud-Daulá Bahadur (Mr. Metcalf).
8. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Maharaja Jaswant Ráo Holkar Bahadur.
9. Akhbár-i-Hazur-i-Wálá, and Akhbár-i-Dárbár-i-Muqaddas Mu'allá.
10. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Shrimant Rao Pandit Pradhan Bahadur.
11. Akhbár-i-Darbar-i-Rájá Mádhóji Bhonsle Apá Sáhí.
12. Akhbár-i-Darbar-i-Rájá Apá Sahib Bhonsle Bahadur.
13. Akhbár-i-Darbar-i-Ásafjá Bahadur.
14. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Maharaja Sawái Pratáp Singh Bahadur.
15. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Nawáb Wazir-ul-Mumálik Bahadur.
16. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Annáji Diwan.
17. Akhbár-Jankóji wá Lakwáji.
18. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Rájá Nawal Singh Bahadur.
19. Parchá-i-Akhabár-i-Muhammad Kamal Khan urf Chitu Khan Pindára
20. Akhbár-i-General Ochterloney.
21. Akhbár-i-Deorhi Bába Sahib Angriá.
22. Akhbár-i-Deorhi-i-Muhammad Iliás Alí Khan Bahadur.
23. Akhbár ba-mujab Nawishtá (Ma'ruzát)-i-Mutsaddiám-i-Dak.
24. Muntakhib Akhbár-i-Hindustán.
25. Akhbár-i-Faizábád Deorhi Begam Sahibá.
26. Parchá-i-Akhabár-i-Aurangábád.
27. Parchá-i-Akhabár-i-Hoshangábád-o-Bhupál.
28. Parcha-i-Ahwál-i-Tázá-i-Qasba-i-Sioní.
29. Akhbár-i-Khándes.
30. Parchá-i-Ahwál-i-Tázá-i-Qasba Járwá.
31. A news-letter of Calcutta, dated February 23rd 1817.
32. Covering letters to the news-letters addressed to Colonel (Afterwards General) Smith.
33. Tipu Sultan—
  - (i) Copy of a letter in reply to an arzí of Tipu Sultán, May 23rd, 1791.
  - (ii) Copy of a letter of Tipu Sultán to Salábat Khan, Zil-Qada 1, 1205 (July 1791).
  - (iii) Copy of a letter of Tipu addressed to Ázim-ul-Umrá.

- (iv) Copy of a *Kharítá* of Tipu to *Āzim-ul-Umrá*, 15th September, 1793
- (v) Letter of Mr. G. F. Cherry to Ghulám Alí Khán and Alí Razá Khán, Vakils, 4th November 1793.
- (vi) A reply of the Vakil of Tipu Sultán at Chinnáppan to the letter of Lord Cornwallis.
- (vii) List of the villages in the Ta'alluqá of Bellári and pergannáh Mokha (Mogha ?) still under the control of the Ta'alluqdárs of Tipu Sultan.
- 34. Lord Cornwallis's letter to Maharaja Sindhia Patil Bahadur, 5th August, 1793.
- 35. Copy of a letter of Raja Gobind Baksh addressed to Captain George Sydenham, 5th Muharram, 1229 A.H.
- 36. A letter addressed to Mr. Elphinstone.
- 37. A copy of a Tilangi letter of Sheikh Muhayy-ud-Din to Abbas Ali, 1st Safar 1228 A.H.
- 38. Miscellaneous papers, not classified.

What remains to be done now is to have the different sets of *Akhbars* arranged chronologically. This should not present much difficulty to a Persian-knowing scholar of history who wishes to work on any particular topic.

Some difficulty will, of course, be experienced in arranging the *Akhbars* of the *Dak Mutsaddis* and the *Muntakhib Akhbar-i-Hidostan* because of their being confusedly mixed up. At the time of making selections from these *Akhbars*, the selectors have detached the sheets required by them from the main letters, and, as, in many cases, the first sheets, which usually bear the dates of the writing of the news, have been detached and, along with second and third sheets, are removed away to other rumals, it is not an easy task to rearrange them. This detachment and separation of sheets has also resulted in splitting up the news of some of the courts and places.

All the letters have now to be sorted in a large number of groups. Each separated sheet has to be closely examined, and, then, the connecting sheets have to be fished out, compared and put together. And it is only then that they can be chronologically arranged. But, in spite of all this, as these *Akhbars* are expected to yield a mine of information of great historical importance, and that information can be used for historical research only when these papers are sorted and chronologically arranged, it will be in the fitness of things for the Historical Records Commission to move the authorities of the Alienation Office Poona to have this work done at their earliest.

In the end I would like to make a few suggestions in respect of the arrangement and publication of these *Akhbars* for transmission to the authorities concerned.

(i) No papers should be allowed to be removed from their respective files, and no sheets should, under any circumstances, be allowed to be detached from the main letters and removed to other files. When selecting papers for publication, the main file of the originals should remain in tact, and the news-letters or portions thereof selected for publication may be copied and arranged according to the scheme of the publication.

(ii) All those news-letters or sheets thereof, which have already been printed and are still lying separate, should be placed back into their respective files, along with the others which have been taken out for this purpose, making arrangements for their publication as suggested above in (i).

(iii) A list of news-letters or portions thereof which have been printed should be placed in the beginning of the file, and all such letters or sheets should be marked or flagged as "printed", with cross references, if possible, for the guidance of the research scholars examining these *Akhbars*.

(iv) For publishing selections from these Persian *Akhbars*, the same uniform practice should be followed as is done in the case of Marathi "Selections from the Peshwa Daftar" and the English "Poona Residency Correspondence", that is, the papers should be selected on particular topics, such as Events at the Court of Rana Zalim Singh, or Maharaja Ranjit Singh, or Papers relating to Malhar Rao Holkar, Daulat Rao Sindhia, etc. This would be of greater service to the cause of history and would prove more useful to those for whom these publications are intended than the disjointed selections of papers that have so far been made.